

## **Groundbreaking for New VA Outpatient Clinic**

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## **Wytheville, Virginia**

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**July 19, 2010**

I am pleased to return to Wytheville today to break ground on the construction of a new VA outpatient clinic, which when completed will provide convenient access to health care services for more than 6,600 veterans in Wythe County and the surrounding areas.

One of my highest priorities in representing Southwest Virginia is ensuring the availability of high quality, easily accessible health care for our region's veterans. To that end, I have worked successfully with the Department of Veterans Affairs in order to establish veterans outpatient clinics in communities throughout the Ninth District.

The clinic on which construction begins today in Wytheville will be operated by the Salem VA Hospital. The Wytheville clinic will be among several clinics opened in the region recently. VA-staffed outpatient clinics have opened in Bristol, Norton, Marion, Jonesville and Vansant.

When veterans clinics are established, the Veterans Administration has traditionally contracted

with local primary care clinics to provide health care services. The VA has chosen to provide services at the Wytheville clinic directly rather than through a contract site.

The construction that begins today is scheduled to be completed early next year, and when completed, the new clinic will be dedicated to serving only veterans and will be open five days a week, Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM. During those hours, a staff of 27, including four primary care physicians, nursing staff, two psychiatrists, two psychologists, social workers and administrative staff will assist patients visiting the clinic. The clinic includes 18 exam rooms, one of which will be dedicated for women's health, and will provide primary care and mental health care services as well as telemedicine services. Any veteran enrolled for health care services will be eligible to receive services at the new clinic.

The location of veterans outpatient clinics throughout the Ninth District greatly enhances the ease with which our region's veterans can receive medical care. The Veterans Administration maintains hospitals in Salem, Virginia and in Johnson City, Tennessee. The medical services provided through these hospitals are convenient for those Ninth District residents who reside within a short distance of one of the hospitals; however, for thousands of Ninth District veterans, a drive to one of the VA hospitals is anything but convenient.

For residents in some portions of Southwest Virginia the drive to and from a VA hospital can consume the better part of a day.

The result of this inconvenience is that many veterans in the area simply forego receiving the primary medical care which promotes good health. Consequently, when veterans eventually visit the VA hospital, they may have developed a serious condition which could have been prevented altogether through the earlier application of routine primary care.

I have long suggested to the Veterans Administration that the provision of community-based primary care services is far more convenient for veterans and promotes better health among them than the former arrangement of requiring a drive to the VA hospitals to receive both primary and specialized care. The provision of community-based services saves the Veterans Administration money in the long run by promoting good health and lessening the number of serious illnesses the VA will eventually be required to treat.

I am pleased that the VA has responded to my suggestions and is now working to

develop primary care outpatient clinics throughout our region. The construction that begins on a new veterans clinic in Wytheville today is the result of our combined efforts to better meet the needs of our region's veterans.

Several individuals deserve our thanks today, and I would like to take this opportunity to recognize them.

Although Daniel Hoffman, Director of the Regional Health Care Network for the VA, cannot be with us today, I want to thank him for his efforts to place a VA clinic in Wytheville.

I also want to express my appreciation to Bob Brooks, Interim Associate Director of the VA Medical Center in Salem, who joins us today, for his assistance in advocating for the placement of a veterans clinic in here in Wytheville.

I would also like to thank Dr. Delmar Short, Chief of the Mental Health Service Line at the VA Medical Center in Salem, Dr. David Brustetter, a psychiatrist who will be serving patients in Wytheville when the clinic is completed, and Kimberly Jarrett with the VA Medical Center's rural health team.

I also want to thank Laura Lee, my Deputy Chief of Staff, for her persistence in working with the Veterans Administration toward the establishment of our community-based outpatient clinics for veterans.

Finally, I want to congratulate the veterans of this region who will benefit from the primary care services which will be offered in Wytheville. A debt of gratitude is owed by our nation to all veterans. Once our armed forces have completed their service, we have a responsibility to our veterans to ensure that they have the best medical care in a convenient setting. The construction that begins today on a new clinic for veterans in Wythe County will further this goal.